



THE LEGACY

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2012, Volume 49, Number 2

TROPICAL STORM AGNES 1972

JANET KUSTERER

It has been forty years, but the marker next to the B&O Museum, Ellicott City Station still brings back vivid memories of Tropical Storm Agnes to those who experienced it—and leaves people who weren't there scratching their heads at the possibility that the marker is correct. Could the water really have reached over 14 feet above where they were standing? The flood worked its way from the Patapsco River up to Leidig's Bakery (now a Subway) on one side, and the Odd Fellows Hall (now offices) on the other.

On June 19, 1972, Tropical Storm Agnes struck land in Florida and continued up the East Coast, hitting Maryland on June 21 and 22 and causing the state over \$77 million worth of property damage—over \$20 million in Howard County. Thirteen inches of rain fell in the Howard County area, turning the Patapsco River into a furious flow of water and debris, overflowing to destroy property and turn Ellicott City's Main Street into a wet and muddy mess. People didn't have much warning about the strength of the storm, since these were the days before 24 hour news, computers and cell phones.

Flooding turned Howard County almost into an island, as many bridges were unusable. More than 900 people were forced to evacuate. Boats maneuvered Main Street and rescued people from the second story of their buildings. Helicopters rescued others throughout the county. The Ellicott City Armory was turned into an evacuation center and county residents who still had their homes took in the homeless. Electric and phone services were disrupted for several days. Eight people died—seven near the Patapsco River, and one in Columbia.



Over 100 residences in the county suffered serious damage, as did 50 businesses on Main Street alone. The recently restored Jonathan Ellicott house, next to the mill, was severely hit and after standing for 200 years had to be destroyed. The George Ellicott house next door was damaged during Agnes, and again in 1975 during Tropical Storm Eloise. In 1987 it was moved across the street to higher ground to protect it from future flooding.

Receding waters left a trail of mud, debris and people's treasures. On Main Street vendors had to decide whether to close up shop permanently or clean up and stay. They were in the midst of preparing for the town's Bicentennial that fall, and stay

continued on page 3

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LEONORA HOENES

This past spring was a very eventful one for the Howard County Historical Society. On Sunday, May 20th, approximately 500 "pilgrims" toured seven of Howard County's most spectacular historic homes and gardens as part of the 75th Annual Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage.

As sponsor of the tour, the Society was responsible for obtaining the homes, coordinating volunteers and hostesses, selling advertisements for the program, placing signage and other tasks. I am proud to say our team, lead by Committee Chair Judith Draper and Co-Chair Shelley Wygant and staffed sub-committee chairs and volunteers including Anne Schoenhut, Ginny Mathias, Pat Sadler, Dessie Moxley, Peggy Hannon, Connie Coss, Paulette Lutz, Dick Hoenes, Phil Stackhouse, George Arthur, Sheila Welton, Susan Stonesifer and Lisa Mason-Chaney as well as countless others who were hostesses, traffic directors and cashiers and general support did a fantastic job. Thank you to each and every one of you who either helped out or attended the event (or both).

The event was a huge fundraising success, grossing over \$18,500 for the Society including the \$1,000 Special Project Award to support the Society's move to the new Miller Branch Library. Part of the proceeds will go toward purchasing new computers to help researchers and volunteers alike have better access to the collection and help us move our photo collection and other materials to a digital format.

In other news, the Society has been working to clean up and clear out the Weir Building in anticipation of using part of the building for storage and possibly subletting a portion to a suitable tenant as a way to fund upkeep expenses.



If you or someone you know might be interested in leasing space in this charming, historic and well-located building next to the Howard County Courthouse, contact former HCHS board member, Kimberly Kepnes at (443) 250-4241.

Finally, I would like to express my continued gratitude to board member and Miller Branch Library manager, Susan Stonesifer for being such an extraordinary help and resource as we continue to settle into our new space at the library. Special thanks also go to Executive Director Lisa Mason-Chaney for her hard work and extra effort in helping the Society deal with the challenges of the post-storm power outage.

Mark your calendar for two exciting events: Our Antiques Appraisal Fair scheduled for October 20th at Caplan's Auction Company at Savage Mill and our annual Holiday Home Tour on December 9th. Look forward to details on which houses will be featured in the next Legacy. ✚

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SEND US YOUR ARTICLES

Anyone interested in contributing articles
or photographs or anything of interest
to the Society, please call the Library at
410-480-3250 or email Shelley Wygant at
wdgdirect@mac.com

COMMODORE JOSHUA BARNEY

STEVE MARSHALL

Joshua Barney was a hero of both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. At various times a resident of Savage, Elkridge and Baltimore, he was born on a farm near Baltimore on July 6, 1859. Commodore Barney was one of 14 children born to William Barney and Frances Holland Watts Barney.

Barney began his life at sea at the age of eleven, serving on the crew of a pilot boat out of Baltimore. He eventually gained further nautical experience sailing with his brother in law.

Commodore Barney served in the Continental and Pennsylvania Navies between 1775 and 1784. In 1794 he declined a commission in the U.S. Navy as he felt

others less qualified than he was were given better positions. Feeling slighted, he accepted a commission in the French Navy and was subsequently promoted to Commodore. He resigned his French commission in 1802.

He returned to Baltimore in 1802 to resume his business career. He retired to his farm in Elkridge in 1809 with his second wife Harriett Coale. The Commodore's hate of the British, (he was held prisoner by them on three previous occasions), drew him into the War of 1812. In July 1813 he assembled a flotilla of barges and gunboats to defend the Chesapeake and its tributaries against the British.

Commodore Barney was wounded in the thigh and once again captured by the British at the battle of Bladensburg. On February 17, 1815 the treaty ending the war was ratified. After the war, Commodore Barney once again retired and purchased land in Kentucky. On a trip to visit his Kentucky property he took ill near Pittsburgh. It is said he developed a thrombosis as a result of his thigh wound in the war. Barney died on December 1, 1818 and is buried in Pittsburgh's Allegheny Cemetery.

The Commodore Joshua Barney House in Savage is now a Bed & Breakfast and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. 🏠

TROPICAL STORM AGNES *continued from page 1*



MUD AND DEBRIS FILLED THE STREET WHEN THE WATER RECEDED

they did, although the clean-up was daunting. The Bicentennial celebration was a huge success, with people celebrating their recovery from the ravages of nature.

Just a few days after the flood, then Vice-president (and former Maryland governor) Spiro T. Agnew visited the area after President Nixon declared it a disaster area. Ellicott City was the first place he inspected.

Although early warning systems—like the county's NotifyMeHoward program—and enhanced weather prediction capabilities now exist, recent storms in the area have shown us that flooding

continues to be a problem in these low lying areas near streams and rivers. We can only hope that a storm with the destructive properties of Tropical Storm Agnes will not occur again. 🏠



FLOODWATERS REACHED UP THE STREET TO LEIDIG'S BAKERY

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LISA MASON-CHANEY

Wow! What a year so far... hot and humid now, yes, BUT it is summer! We have had a great year. The visitors and researchers have far exceeded our expectations.

I would like to thank all the researchers, interns, volunteers (you know who you are!) and everyone who has helped contribute to the success of the Howard County Historical Society. We are so busy....which is a good thing! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

EDITOR'S NOTE

JANET KUSTERER

It's hot, but I hope you don't let the weather stop you from visiting us at the Howard County Fair, August 4 to 11. We always look forward to being a part of this wonderful county tradition.

These days the building we are in there is air conditioned, so stop by and linger at our exhibit. Of course we are also settled in at our new space at the Miller Library and Historical Center. Stop by and see us there after you check out the Farmers Market on Wednesday afternoon, or while you are browsing in the stacks.

Our Museum is still down on Court Avenue, open on Fridays and Saturdays. Right now we have an exhibit of the photographs entered in this year's contest sponsored by the Ellicott City Restoration Foundation. Amazing stuff. ♣

MEET THE AUTHORS

JANET KUSTERER

Much has been written about the rich history of Howard County. In recognition of this, Preservation Howard County in partnership with Howard County Tourism is sponsoring a

HOWARD COUNTY'S BLACK CIVIL WAR HERO

ADAM NETTINA

Imagine a lone black soldier proudly waving an American flag before scores of infantrymen on a bloody day in 1864. As bullets fly by his head and a grey line of Confederate soldiers advance across the smoke-filled embankments, the former slave rallies his brothers in arms, directing them to continue the struggle for freedom on one of the Civil War's deadliest days.

Something out of a Hollywood movie? Sounds like it, but the event was real. Once more, its protagonist was from right here in Howard County.

Decatur Dorsey is arguably Howard County's greatest war hero, and its only Medal of Honor Recipient. Born a slave somewhere in what is believed to be the Marriottsville area in 1836, he would later enlist in Company B of the 39th Infantry Regiment in March of 1864. One of seven regiments raised in Maryland for African American soldiers following the Emancipation Proclamation, the 39th Infantry was composed exclusively of black soldiers, many of whom had been slaves only a few years earlier.

Dorsey was one of those soldiers. By late July he had risen from the rank of Private to Sergeant, and with the rest of his unit was deployed outside Petersburg, Virginia while Union forces under the command of George Meade laid siege to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. On July 30th Meade's forces, including Dorsey and the black soldiers of the 39th, attempted to breach Confederate fortifications in the disastrous attempt now known as the Battle of the Crater.

According to his official commendation for the Medal of Honor, Sergeant Dorsey not only "planted his unit's colors on the Confederate works," during the offensive, but he retrieved the colors and used them to help inspire his fellow soldiers after a Confederate counterattack had driven them back. While no detailed description of his role in the fighting has survived, it can be assumed that Sergeant Dorsey's action came at tremendous risk for his own personal safety. It would take more than a year, however, for Dorsey to receive the Medal of Honor for his gallantry and bravery in action.

Not much is known of Dorsey's postwar life, although it's believed he suffered health complications due to contracting typhoid and malaria fever during the war. He's known to have married Mannie Christie in Baltimore on January 4th 1866, and died on July 11th 1891 in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Today, historians and grateful citizens alike can honor the memory of Sergeant Dorsey not only at his gravesite in North Bergen, New Jersey, but right here in Howard County. A marker detailing his role in the war sits outside the Ellicott City Colored School, Restored, at the intersection of Main Street and Rogers Ave. in Ellicott City. To this day, Dorsey remains one of only 16 African American soldiers to receive the nation's highest honor for his service in the Civil War, and forever serves as a testament to Howard County's contributions in helping bring about the end of slavery and restoration of the Union. ♣

"Meet the Authors Day" at the Welcome Center, 8267 Main Street, Ellicott City, from 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 19. Several members of the Historical Society will be among those signing. Our former president, Shelley Wygant, will be there with the Society's book, "Images of America: Howard County."

Joetta Cramm hopes to be there, along with Martha Clark. I will attend with my writing partner Vickie Goeller. An unprecedented fifteen local authors are expected to attend. Please join us in support of the continued preservation of Howard County and its history.

MILESTONES ON MAINSTREET



YATES MARKET AND YATES HARDWARE SERVED MAIN STREET FOR OVER A CENTURY.



ENALEE AND ROLAND BOUNDS ON THE OCCASION OF HER AWARD AS PERSON OF THE YEAR.

One hundred twenty-seven years ago, Yates Market opened on Ellicott City's Main Street. Now it has closed—the longest running business in the historic district. Betty Yates Jacobs and her sister Cheryl Yates Libertini ran the business after their father, Bladen Yates, died in 2002. It was Bladen's grandfather who

started the business. Bladen took it over in 1938 and ran it while his wife Dorothea ran the hardware store next door. For many years you could buy your groceries there, have keys made and chairs caned and coffee ground. At Thanksgiving you could pick up a fresh turkey, Faidley's oysters and house-made

sage sausage. They even delivered groceries locally. Their caring, personal service made shopping there a pleasure. They will be missed.

In 1962 Enalee Bounds, her mother and her sister opened Ellicott's Country Store in the Walker Chandler house on Main Street. Fifty years later Enalee is still there, offering her special mix of antiques and accessories that were such a departure from the wares offered elsewhere on the street when they were first introduced, but began a trend that continues today. Because of Enalee the Ellicott City Businessman's Association made room for women, and dropped the 'man' in their name. Enalee and her husband Roland were part of a small band of people who worked together to save historic sites in the area—from the Railroad Station Museum to the Thomas Isaac Log Cabin to the George Ellicott House. For all of her accomplishments Enalee was named Person of the Year in the historic district by the Ellicott City Restoration Foundation. Congratulations to Enalee for an accolade well earned. 🌿

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For up-to-the minute news on happenings at the Society, become a fan on FaceBook. In addition to finding out what we are up to, you can also post comments, questions and photos of Society events and Howard County history. If you aren't on FaceBook yet, sign up today at www.facebook.com. 🌿

LEARNING TRUNKS

The Education Outreach Committee of the Howard County Historical Society has put together "Learning Trunks" that can be rented to schools or other groups. The goal of these trunks is to bring Maryland, and especially Ellicott City and Howard County history, to the children in a hands-on learning style. Areas addressed in the trunks – one for the 1700s, one for the 1800s and one for the 1900s– are NATIVE AMERICANS, AGRICULTURE, MILITARY, RECREATION, CLOTHING, TOYS, EDUCATION, HOUSEHOLD TOOLS and OCCUPATIONS.

The Trunk Program needs volunteers who sew, type, have graphic art skills, or can do research. We still need clothing for each of the six eras: Native American, Colonial, Revolutionary, Civil War, WWI, WWII,

and Present Day. Contact Anne Schoenhut at HCHS.

We are grateful to the following individuals and businesses who have contributed to this project.

EDUCATIONAL TRUNK DONATIONS:

- Adon and Jane Phillips, Country Crafters
- Enalee Bounds, Ellicott's Country Store
- David Reyes, Reyes Jewelry Exchange
- Brenda Franz, Attic Antiques
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- Family of Charles B. Clark
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Thank you



HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

☐ YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE HOWARD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ENJOY MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS THAT INCLUDE A SUBSCRIPTION TO THE LEGACY, INVITATIONS TO EXCLUSIVE EVENTS, A 10% DISCOUNT ON PUBLICATIONS, PLUS A HANDSOME HCHS CAR MAGNET EMBLEM IF I JOIN AT THE CHARTER MEMBER LEVEL OR HIGHER.

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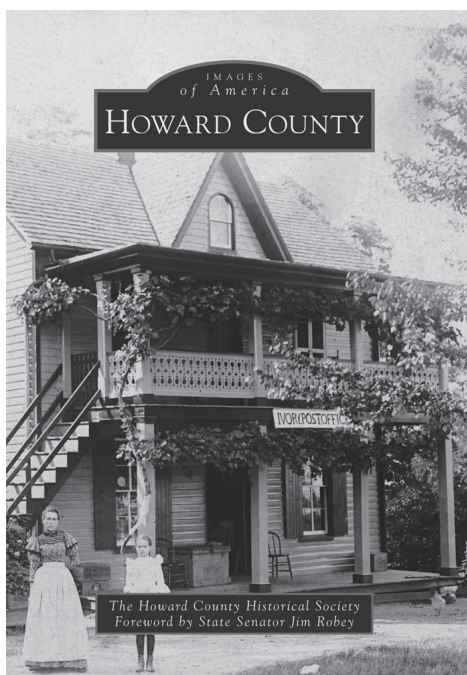
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